Insights on the transition to sustainability: a view from the policy sciences

Dan Mazmanian, Director
USC Center on Governance
School of Policy, Planning, and Development

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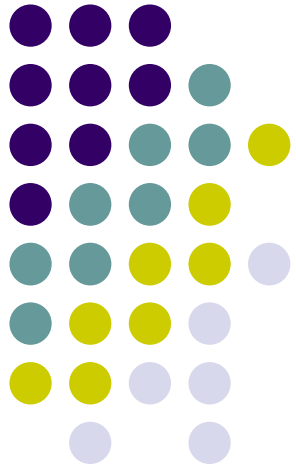
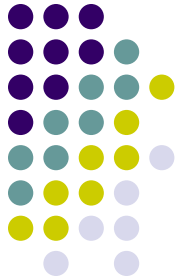


The first order question is:



When is a “condition” (social, economic, ecological) a public policy “problem” in need of a broad societal response?

Answer: When the public believes it is a “problem”.

Answer: When awareness of a problem, solutions waiting in the wings, and political timing converge (Kingdon thesis)

Is climate change a problem? What the public thinks.

Results from the 2006 and 2007 Survey on Energy & Environment

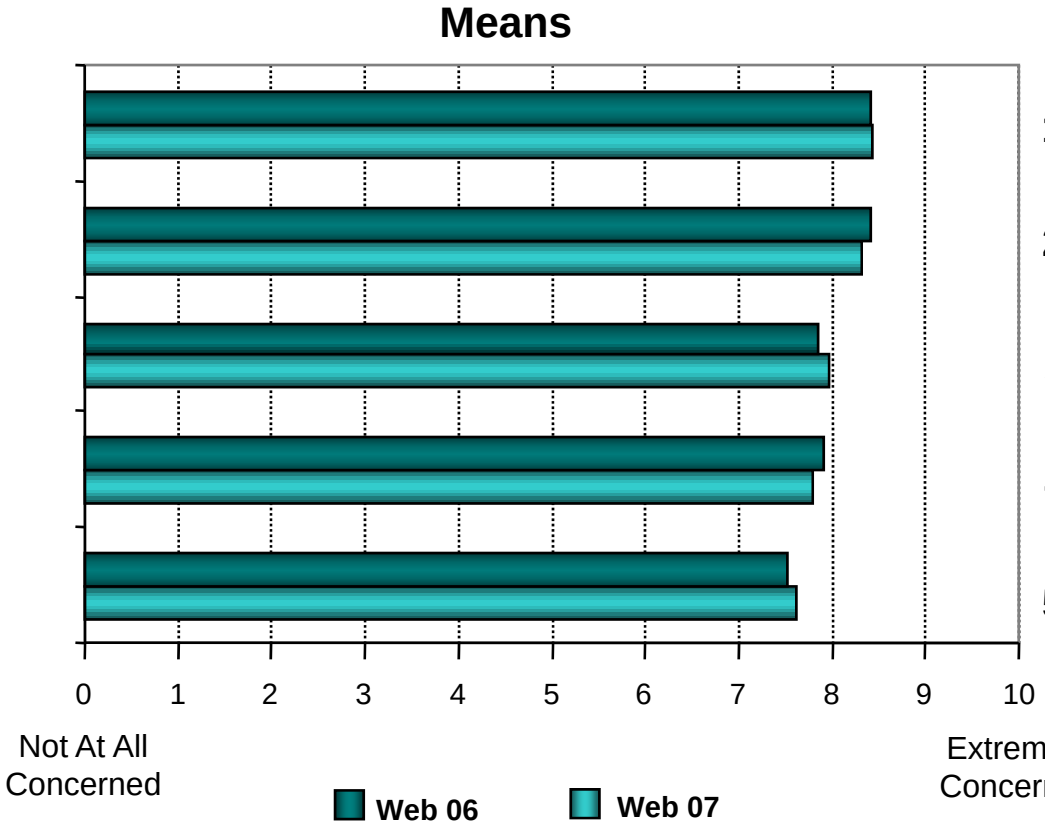
A web-based survey conducted by

Hank Jenkins-Smith, Kerry Herron, & Carol Silva of the Center for Applied Social Research,

University of Oklahoma

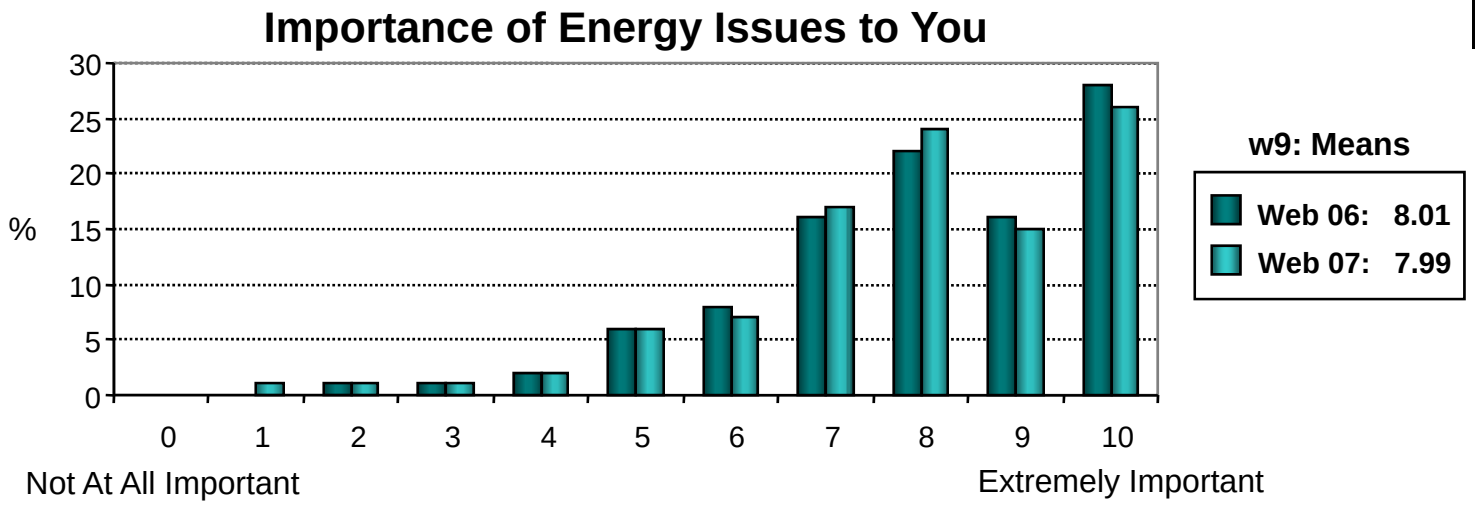
For the full report: http://casr/ou.edu/nsp/nsp_readings/07_security (ch. 4)

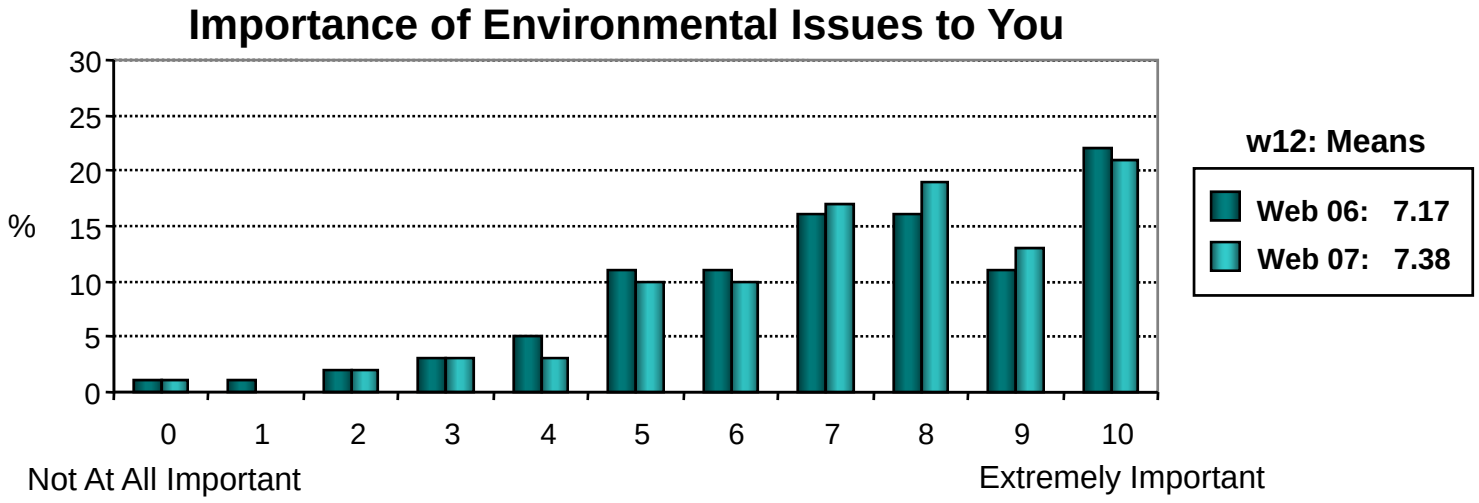
Public Policy Concerns of the American Public



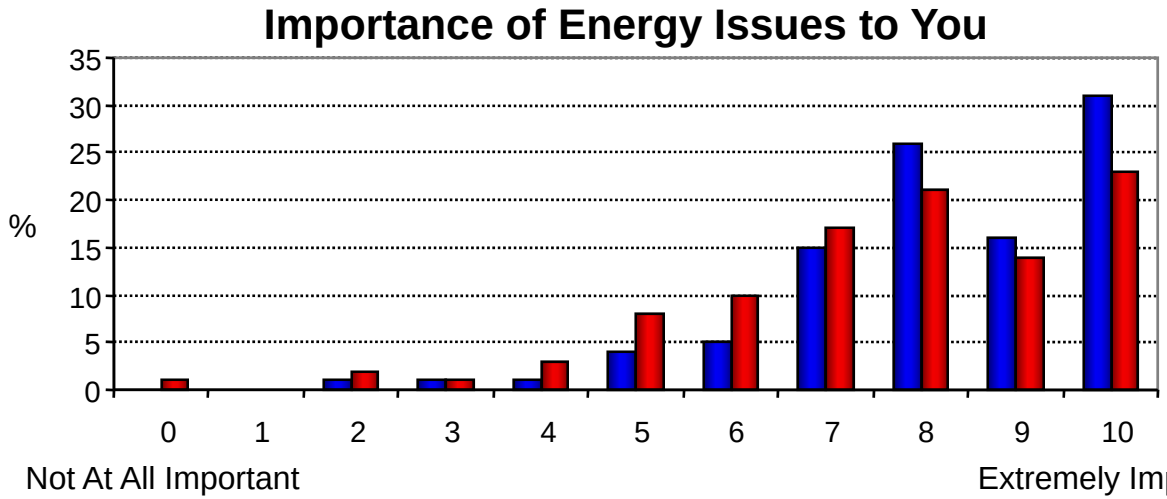
	Web 06	Web 07
1-Healthcare	8.41	8.43
2-Energy	8.41	8.31
3-Security	7.86	7.96
4-Economy	7.92	7.80
5-Environment	7.52	7.63

Energy & Environment





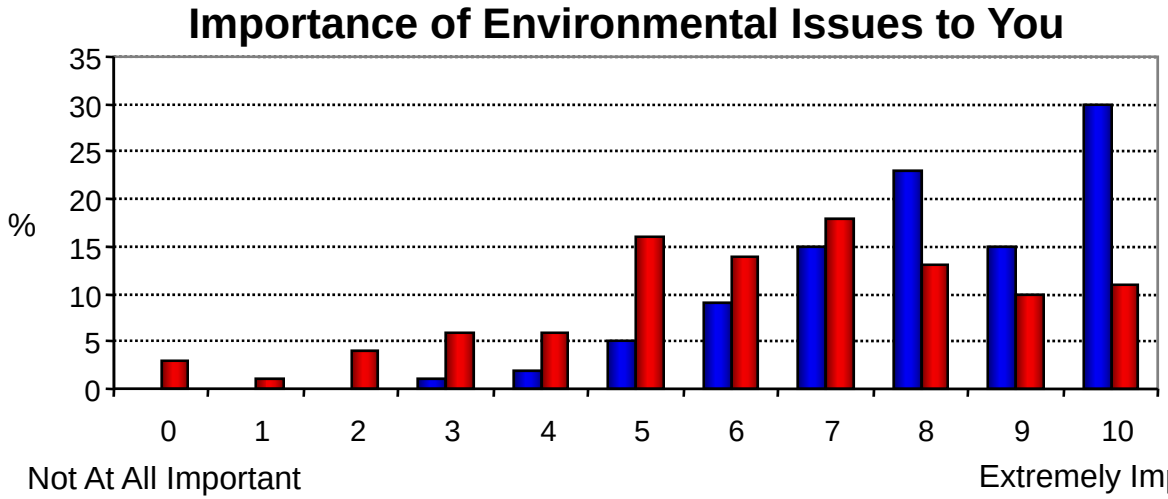
Partisan Perspectives



Web 07: Means

Dems:	**8.34**
Repubs:	**7.63**

$p < .0001$



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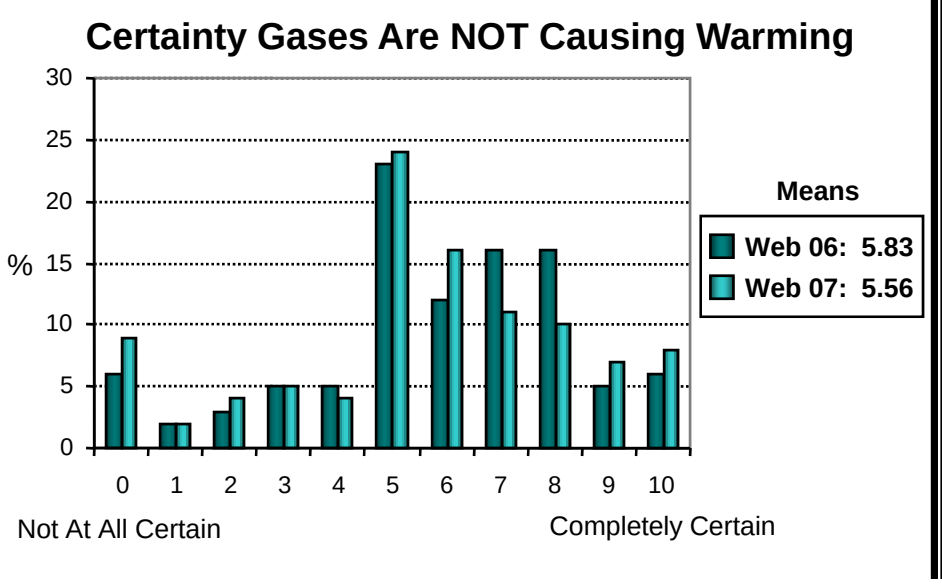
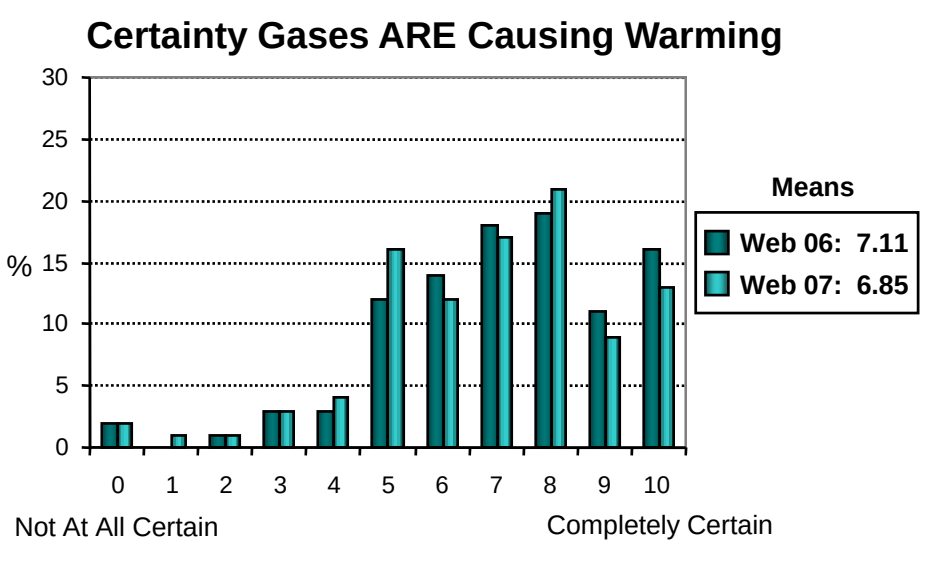
Is Global Warming Real?

w28: Are greenhouse gases, such as those resulting from the combustion of coal, oil natural gas, and other materials causing average global temperatures to rise?

	Web 06 %	Web 07 %
No	25	24
Yes	75	76





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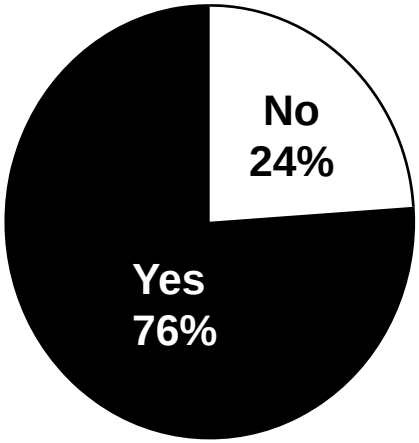
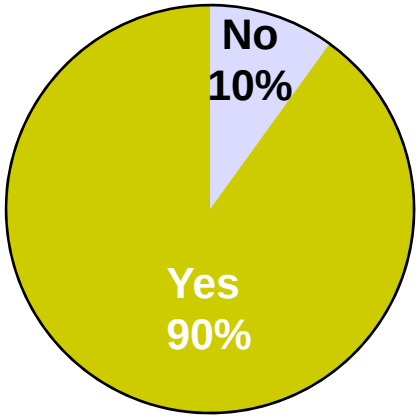
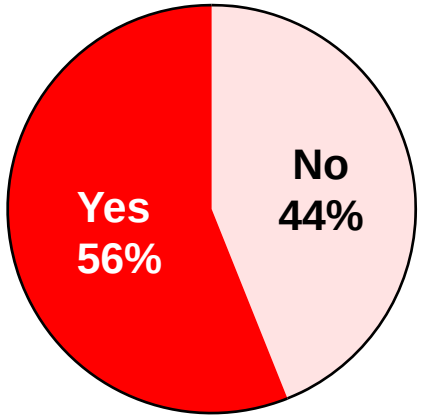


Web 07: All



Strong Democrats



Strong Republicans

Attention to Global Climate Change (GCC)

	All (Means)	Strong Dems	Strong Repubs
How much attention have you paid to global climate change? (0 = No Attention—10 = Close and Constant Attention)	6.41	7.09	5.47
How well informed do you consider yourself to be about GCC? (0 = Not At All Informed—10 = Completely Informed)	6.35	6.47	6.41

Temperature Direction

Over the past few years, have average temperature where you live been rising, falling, or staying about the same?

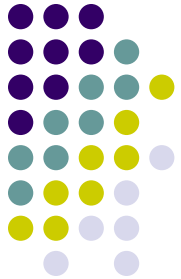
%	All	Strong Dems	Strong Repubs
Rising	59	71	44
Falling	5	6	4
Staying about same	36	23	52

Future Temperatures

How much do scientists expect average globaltemps to increase over the next 50 to 70 years?

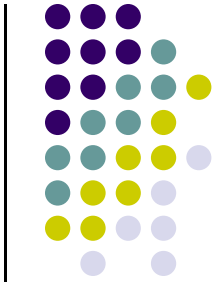
%	All	Strong Dems	Strong Repubs
0–1 Degree	11	4	19
2–5 Degrees	48	49	47
6–9 Degrees	23	28	19
10 or More Degrees	18	18	15

The second order question is: What Is to be done?



- The IPCC report outlines three scenarios (paths) for reduction of GHG's.
- Near term policies are being prescribed and some pursued (e.g., energy conservation).
- Long-term policies to achieve the preferred "low emissions" scenario are beyond reach given today's policies, politics, economics, and the public's willingness to pay – few believe we can from here to get there!

Incremental vs. Comprehensive Change Strategies



Premise

Thousands of incremental steps may lead in the transition to the low emissions scenario or circumstances may compel more abrupt and radical adjustments.

Which ever the case, if the result is to be *a more sustainable world*, it will likely be characterized by the a cluster of “sustainability” values, policies, technical and social characteristics.

The “problem” will need to be defined as:

Bringing into harmony human and natural systems.

Leading to the broad objectives of:

- Learning how to better balance long-term societal and natural system needs.
- Placing additional emphasis on resource and biodiversity conservation.
- Developing an eco-centric ethic within the culture.

Climate change policies will be needed at the:

- Societal (national) level to guide needs assessment and set goal prioritization.
- Industry-level with attention to product design, materials selection, and environmental strategic planning.
- Individual level with respect to consumption and life-style choices.

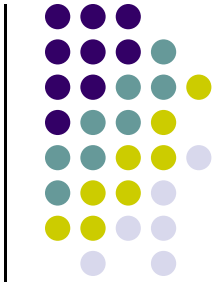
Policy approaches and “tools” will include:

- Extensive future visioning by the public.
- Local and regional planning based on sustainability guidelines (e.g, 3 E’s, triple bottom line).
- Total quality environmental management and similar life-cycle-design practice adopted throughout business and industry.
- Performance-based management applied to all climate change policies and programs.

Development of political and institutional capacity will take place through:

- Greater reliance on public/private partnerships.
- Institutionalization of decision support capacity building (see Moser) at all levels.
- New political and administrative institutions that will focus on long-term climate policy needs and planning, and policy implementation.

Moving Ahead: Some Practical Lessons



1. Technological and scientific analysis and solutions are imperative but they are not enough
2. The decision making and its legitimacy matters
   - Need for stakeholder and policy maker involvement
3. Framing of the problem matters
   - Emphasize the positive, threats rarely suffice
4. Institutional, legal mandates matter
   - Play to self-interest, market incentives, and rewards whenever possible
   - Seek out scale-appropriate remedies